

NOVEMBER 28 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

That first reading from Daniel sounds like a script for a horror movie.

A lion with wings, eagle wings, chopped off. And then a bear, standing up, with three ribs in its mouth—obviously, full of blood. And then a leopard with wings on its back, and four heads. And finally, a beast.

You can use your imagination to figure out the beast. Just don't choose Loch Ness Monster, because it's a very cute monster in Scotland. Or Yeti, the bigfoot... giant in the north. Because they are very pleasant people. But this beast was horrible indeed. He had 10 horns, and teeth of iron.

Now this vision comes from the second part of the book of Daniel, where he has four visions, and this is one of the visions. And the four beasts stood for the enemies of the people of Israel—the Persians, the Medes, the Greeks, and finally, the—I'm sorry, I don't get—I can't remember it just now, but one of the four that were there at that time.

Now all of them were destroyed except for the beast at the end. The beast were for the Greeks that stood for Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was creating a lot of problems. He had destroyed the temple, he had put on a gymnasium, he had asked them to adore the false gods. But eventually, even this beast was going to be destroyed.

And why do we name all these things? Because the book of Daniel is supposed to be one of comfort and one of consolation

and courage. Well, Daniel wants to show that these beasts, horrible as they were, and these enemies, horrible as they were, were finally the people that would be conquered, because they trusted in God—the Israelites trusted in God.

And God is shown as somebody very powerful. His throne has got fire around it. His chariot has got wheels of fire. When the words come out of his mouth, they are words of fire. Fire all over the place. And the reason is that no matter how terrible the enemies were, the ancient God was even more powerful than all of them together.

These images of God really do not fit in our times today. There's so much war and violence, I'd like a God of peace, a God that gets justice, a God that puts order. And we cry out, Where is this God? You know, when we have the pictures of the orphans and widows, I don't like to watch them, because late into the night I can still see the images. They're not—I'm not concerned about the fact that they are starving and they are suffering. That is true, but what hurts me even more is the utter lack of confusion. The children don't know what's happening around them. You know?

And there are two ways, as they grow up into adults. They either say, Where was God when I really needed God? Or, they go to the other extreme which says, The only way I survived is because God held me in the palm of God's hands.

We want a God of peace, a God of quiet, but we want God to come immediately into our lives. A man said to God, God, what did I do wrong? I got up in this morning and prayed. And then when I tried to turn on the coffee machine, it would not perc. Then when

I tried to get into the car, it would not start. And so I decided I had to go by the subway, and it was packed! And some people hadn't had a shower for ages, they were smelly. What did I do wrong?

And when I tried to get on my cell phone to call the office, they would not answer. And God said simply, You know, the cord for your coffee machine was frayed. And it would've set the house on fire. As you got out, I knew there was a drunken driver three blocks away. If he had come, he would have T-boned you, and you would have had a severe accident. When you got into the subway you were so irritated with the coffee machine and the car, that you didn't—that all the smelly people and the people that crowded you, it took away from that. And finally, there was an enemy who was trying to get you on your cell phone to set you up in a trap. And so I did something with the airwaves.

God knows the picture far more than you and I know. God sees the past, the present, and what is going to happen. And so, we wait in God's own time, because God will answer our prayers.

And Jesus tells us in the Gospel: “The day of the Lord is coming, and you can recognize it by the signs that are around you.” And what are the signs? The signs were the signs of Jesus at the beginning of the Gospel of Saint Luke: “The Spirit of the Lord has come down upon me. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the captives will be set free.” Do you see that happening around you? And most especially, “The good news will be proclaimed to the poor.”

As we come to the end of this liturgical year, and on Sunday we will be celebrating the first Sunday of Advent, we look forward

to the signs that God is in our life. And we thank God and we have a sense of gratitude, that the Lord is walking with us, and will walk with us through the coming year.

God bless you all.